

The Pastor & His Money

-by Pastor Rob Buhl, MBA

Teaching My Wife about Money

My lovely wife and I are six years apart in age. When we married, she was just shy of her 20th birthday. I had more life experience, had served in the military, lived on my own and even had dabbled with investing – all prior to being married. So, naturally, like all mature, newly married men – who are giants of the Christian faith – there were a few things she could learn from me. Uh-hum. At least that's what was rolling around in my mind. What is actually true of our first years of marriage is that we learned from one another.

Who is good at budgeting?

These days I do most of our budgeting and financial management, but it hasn't always been that way. More than once we threw the checkbook at each other every few months while we struggled to establish a system that worked for our household. It was probably five or six years into marriage before the responsibility settled on me. Together we came to realize the grace needed to see her strengths in money management and my strengths in money management.

Accept outside wisdom

People experience deep fears, anxieties, and emotions associated with money. This is one reason why money related issues regularly have a negative impact on marriages. Ministry marriages are no exception. Despite the Bible's common insistence that we gain wisdom from many counselors, people resist when it causes them to change their mind (Proverbs 24:6). After completing a course on personal finances my wife and I made an agreement. We will follow our financial plan and only deviate from it if we agree to do so, and if we come to a point of disagreement, we will take the counsel of the financial advisor who taught the course. Not only have we had fewer impasses since then, but we have stayed on track with our financial plan.

Personal Allowance

Income exceeding expenses, saving a little for the future, being frugal and fun – are all good directions with a personal financial plan. However, the most surprising lesson of marital money matters surfaced when my then new wife needed some new clothes but felt guilty about buying them. Money was tight and there wasn't much margin. "Why do I get to buy something new,

and you don't," she said. "And these shoes are so expensive". Accepting advice from others, we decided to each take a monthly cash allowance. Brilliant! Over the years the amount has varied, but currently our monthly cash allowance is used for clothes, hobbies, or going out with friends. It gives us each freedom to make purchases without upsetting the family budget or one another.

Be Open and Honest

Pastor, this is no secret to you, but marriage is of all things, founded on mutual trust. Our personal finances can be a way that trust is lost, or trust is gained. Being open and honest with my wife about our personal finances sets her at ease. She trusts me. And because of her habit of honesty, I trust her. Money can't buy that trust, but it does facilitate it. If you or your wife are hiding money habits from one another it will erode your relationship. Eventually, as you well know, this erosion in your home life will negatively affect other areas of your life.

Pastor Rob's Financial Tip:

If you're struggling in your household finances, go through a personal financial course together. Facing the issue together, while someone else is teaching, has the potential to change your household finances and your marriage.